



Nishga Declaration

The Nishga People is a distinct and unique society within the many faceted cultural mosaic that is Canada. The issue is whether the Nishga element within this mosaic will be allowed to face the 'difficulties', will be allowed to become full participants contributing in a positive way to the well being of the Naas Valley in particular and the country in general. The positive aspect of this participation, we feel, must be through self-determination, self-determination that is dependent on the shared and mutual responsibility of governments and Nishga People.

If Canadian Society and Nishga Society of which it is part, is to be truly free, we as a distinct people and as citizens, must be allowed to face the difficulties and find the answers, answers that can only be found by determining our own social, economic and political participation in Canadian life. Governments, both Federal and Provincial, must be persuaded that Nishga self-determination is the path that will lead to a fuller and richer life for Nishga People and all Canadians.

We, as Nishgas, are living in a world where dynamic initiatives must be taken to achieve self-determination especially in respect to the natural resources of the Naas Valley, in order to control our own process of development within the larger Canadian society and to make decisions that affect our lives and the lives of our children. We realize that our struggle for self-determination will be a difficult one, but we refuse to believe that it is in vain, if governments and the Nishga People agree to their mutual responsibility for that growth and development. Nishga self-determination of resource development within the Naas Valley is the economic base that will allow for self-determination of the other aspects of modern 20th Century society that makes up this Canada of ours.

In 1969, N.T.C. agreed in principle with the "statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, in the face of strong opposition from other Native Peoples across the nation. That agreed principle was incorporated in the policy statement: "true equality presupposes that the Indian people have the right to full and equal participation in the cultural, social, economic and political life of Canada". Such an agreement in principle, however, does not necessarily mean the acceptance of the steps to implement as suggested by the 1969 Policy Statement. Co-existent with the N.T.C. agreement of the stated principle is also the N.T.C. agreement with the Hawthorne Report, that "Indians should be regarded as Citizens-Plus; in addition to the normal rights and duties of citizenship, Indians possess certain rights as charter members of the Canadian Community".

Undergirding the whole of the above, is the demand that, as the inhabitants since time immemorial of the Naas Valley, (the boundaries of which are stipulated in the case, "Calder et al vs the Attorney-General of B.C.") all plans for resource extraction and 'development' must cease until aboriginal title is accepted by the Provincial Government. Also, we, the Nishga People, believe that both the Government of B.C. and the Government of Canada must be prepared to negotiate with the Nishgas on the basis that we, as Nishgas, are inseparable from our land; that it cannot be bought or sold in exchange for "extinguishing of title".

CONCLUSION:

What we seek is the right to survive as a People and a Culture. This, we believe, can only be accomplished through free, open-minded and just negotiations with the provincial and federal authorities, negotiations that are based on the understanding that self-determination is the 'answer' that government seeks to the 'difficulties' as they apply to the Nishga People.